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Korea

Korea Background:

Kim Il-song visited Peking for a week in mid-April, the first time he has been to China since the PRC and DPRK signed a security and friendship treaty in 1961. While we have no hard evidence that Kim came to China seeking support for military action against South Korea, it seems likely that he was reviewing his options in the wake of developments in Indochina.

During the week of Kim's visit, the harshness of the North Korean leader's public comments seemed to wane a bit, while the Chinese held to a position of support for the "independent and peaceful" reunification of Korea. The final communique reiterated this line, while also suggesting PRC support for a high-gear diplomatic effort to support North Korean objectives of gaining a U.N. General Assembly resolution in the fall calling for the dissolution of the U.N. Command and withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Korea. The communique characterized the DPRK as "the sole legal sovereign state of the Korean nation." Chinese unease about Kim's intentions was suggested, however, in the communique phrase about "the Chinese people's high respect for and trust in Comrade Kim Il-song" -- suggesting an effort to salve the North Korean leader's vanity even as they expressed concern that he not violate assurances about not doing something rash.

Since Kim's return to Pyongyang, rumors have circulated in the Peking diplomatic corps that the North Korean leader will also visit Moscow and various Eastern European capitals. These rumors have failed to materialize thus far, however, generating speculation that Kim may have found the Soviets unresponsive to his probing for new options.

The Chinese never responded to our efforts last fall to get diplomatic motion into an effort to terminate the U.N. Command while leaving the armistice intact. PRC leaders have indicated to you their intention to follow Pyongyang's lead on this issue, and we do not anticipate any change in this position in the coming months. Indeed, in view of Kim's high-profile visit to Peking, we assume that the Chinese are now locked into a diplomatic strategy with Pyongyang.

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